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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, March 23, 2010

THE SENATE

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[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to remind all senators that March 21 is the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

This day promotes a number of values, including tolerance, acceptance and openness to ethnic and racial differences.

Tolerance is an attitude that involves respecting the freedom of others, or respecting their ways of thinking or acting that may be different from our own. This word has two meanings: one, which is more negative, means the capacity to withstand or endure, and the second, which is more positive, means to accept, and implies a choice.

Tolerance is an important part of human rights and peace. It involves giving others the right to have their person and identity respected. It means that one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs.

According to UNESCO, building tolerance requires access to education. Intolerance is often rooted in ignorance and fear: fear of the unknown, of the "other," other cultures, religions and

nations. In this period of history when terrorism and fear of terrorism divide societies, the notion of tolerance becomes even more important.

Unfortunately, openness is not innate. It must be cultivated, and can be promoted, for example, with awareness campaigns. If tolerance is a trait that is desired or appreciated by a society, that attitude will also be appreciated and considered as a socially desirable quality.

As a result, society as a whole, and in particular its decision-makers, must support all education efforts by its members, so that they appreciate and adopt that attitude.

In an environment where intolerance and discrimination are all too common, the Tolerance Caravans educate about differences, promote awareness, and provide information about the dangers of intolerance, prejudice, exclusion, racism and discrimination in all forms.

• (1410)

The Tolerance Caravan in Alberta, inspired by the Caravane de la tolérance that travels throughout Quebec, has been organizing activities for young people in our schools since 2006, activities that raise awareness about prejudice and discrimination. It provides our young generation with an opportunity to interactively explore and discuss ideas related to tolerance.
